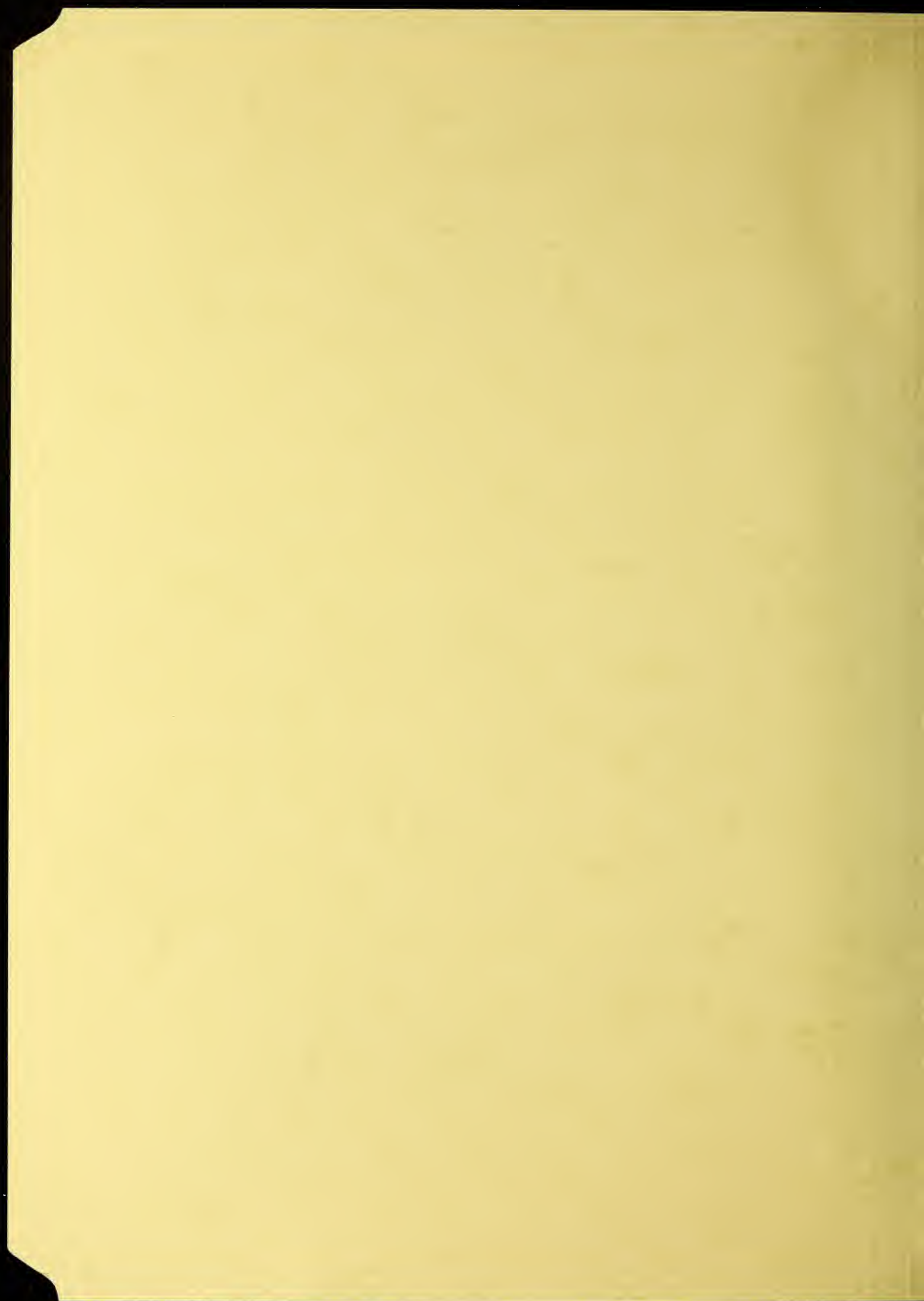


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Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

Israel Stiefel

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LINCOLN AND PENNSYLVANIA

(An address delivered by the Honorable Israel Stiefel
before the Senate of Pennsylvania on February 10, 1959.)

Abraham Lincoln took pride in saying that his ancestors had come from Pennsylvania, and his friendly feeling toward our State was reciprocated by the support of Pennsylvania during the fateful years when the nation was being tested in the fires of Civil War. It was on Pennsylvania soil that Lincoln's ancestors settled before they yielded to the lure of the West -- like their neighbors the Boones. Today, as we commemorate the sesquicentennial of the birth of the great martyr President, we take pride in calling attention to his Pennsylvania ancestry, to his visits to Pennsylvania, and to the support which our State gave him in preserving the Union.

Mordecai Lincoln, the great-great-grandfather of President Abraham Lincoln, came to Pennsylvania with his brother Abraham about 1720. Born in Massachusetts, the two brothers had come to New Jersey before 1714, and settled at or near Middletown, Monmouth County. In 1720 Mordecai Lincoln moved to Chester County, Pennsylvania, and about 1728 he moved to Berks County, where he was a neighbor of Squire Boone, the father of Daniel Boone. Mordecai Lincoln was a respected citizen of Berks County. In May, 1728, the Provincial government made him one of the commissioners for the defense of that area against the Indians, and he also served as a justice of the peace and inspector of roads.

Mordecai's eldest son John Lincoln, the President's great-grandfather, was born in New Jersey in 1716. He was a weaver by trade. John Lincoln sold what remained of the Lincoln lands in New Jersey, and bought more land in Berks and Lancaster counties. His son Abraham Lincoln, the President's grandfather, was born in 1744 in Berks County. The family then seemed well established in Pennsylvania, but sometime in the 1760's John Lincoln moved his family to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, the first of the moves which carried the Lincolns to Kentucky and Illinois.

But the Lincoln name did not disappear in Pennsylvania. Others of Mordecai's children remained, and there were still Lincolns, distant cousins, living in Pennsylvania when Abraham Lincoln was in the White House. President Lincoln remained fully conscious of his Pennsylvania heritage and connections.

Lincoln's associations with the Keystone State, however, go much deeper than this connection through his ancestors. In February, 1861, while the ship of state was drifting upon the rocks of secession and civil conflict, President-elect Lincoln set out from Springfield on his way to Washington. To reassure the people and to convince them that the breakup of the nation could and should be averted, Lincoln made a speaking tour of the loyal states, a tour which included several cities in Pennsylvania. Speaking at Pittsburgh on February 15th, he pointed out the artificial nature of the crisis, since there was nothing in his program which could justify the course which the Southerners were following. His advice was "to keep cool." "Let the people on both sides of the line keep their self-possession," and the crisis would be over. From Pittsburgh President-elect Lincoln traveled to Cleveland, Ohio, then through New York and New Jersey, and re-entered Pennsylvania on February 21st at Philadelphia, the city of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. On Washington's Birthday, speaking in Independence Hall, he gave new and timely meaning to the Declaration of Independence, saying that it "gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance" -- that it "gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but to all the world, for all future time."

The same day, February 22nd, Lincoln went on to Harrisburg where he heard the great Pennsylvania War Governor, Andrew G. Curtin, pledge the support of the Commonwealth to the defense of the Union. In his reply Lincoln stressed his faith in the strength and wisdom of the American people: "I feel that, under God, in the strength of the arms and the wisdom of the heads of these masses, after all, must be my support." At six o'clock in the evening, Lincoln left a banquet given in his honor, boarded the train for Washington, and departed to fulfill his magnificent destiny as the savior of the American nation.

It was just ninety-eight years ago, on February 15th and February 21st and 22nd, that Abraham Lincoln made these visits to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg, where he expressed great ideas which were to guide him during the years when he strove mightily to hold the nation together, always with Pennsylvania's support and backing. Those are dates to be remembered as the anniversaries of Abraham Lincoln's coming home to Pennsylvania, when he renewed his close ties with the State from which his ancestors had come.

Several times during the war years he returned to speak and to draw upon the rich store of faith and confidence in the hearts of Pennsylvanians. Everyone knows of the great occasion at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, when the national cemetery was dedicated at the place where the greatest battle of the war had been fought in the first days of July. He was not the principal speaker, but was invited to make a "few appropriate remarks." These remarks were an immortal and classic expression of American democratic ideals which can never become tedious through repetition.

Again while General Grant was hammering his way toward Richmond in a campaign which was taking bloody toll of human life, and while Lincoln himself faced a dubious prospect in his second campaign for the Presidency, the President came back to Pennsylvania to speak and to benefit by the rich store of patriotic faith in the hearts of her citizens. Speaking in Philadelphia on June 16, 1864, at a "Sanitary Fair" held by the prototype of the modern Red Cross, he called attention to the importance of voluntary organizations in the care of sick and wounded soldiers and said they proved that "The national spirit of patriotism is even firmer and stronger than at the commencement of the war." This last visit of Lincoln in life to Pennsylvania took place just ninety-five years ago this coming June, another date to be remembered.

The end of the war was actually not far distant; Appomattox and the end of Southern resistance came in ten months. But the joy of victory was soon changed to mourning for the martyr President, victim of an assassin's bullet. In death Abraham Lincoln passed through Pennsylvania for the last time. Late in April, 1865, the funeral train carrying his body came to Harrisburg and Philadelphia on the last journey home to Springfield, Illinois. On April 22, 1865, Lincoln's body lay in state in Independence Hall while more than 85,000 people filed past to pay their last respects. The people of Pennsylvania mourned him then as sincerely as they had welcomed him on other occasions.

Pennsylvania's support of Lincoln's work in saving the Union took very tangible form during the years of the war. On the eve of the conflict the General Assembly had passed resolutions on January 24, 1861, calling upon the Federal government to maintain its authority and pledging "the faith and power of Pennsylvania. . .to the support of such measures, in any manner and to any extent that may be required of her." On April 18th, after the attack on Fort Sumter had begun the war, the General Assembly by an unanimous vote pledged "the faith, credit, and resources of the State, in both men and money," to the defense of the Union.

Pennsylvania was quick in keeping the promise of its elected representatives. President Lincoln had called for 75,000 volunteers on April 15th, giving Pennsylvania a quota of fourteen regiments, but the popular response in the Commonwealth was so enthusiastic that there were enough men for twenty-five regiments. Local militia companies immediately offered their aid to the Federal government; five of these companies reached Washington on April 18th to defend the capital. These companies from Reading, Pottsville, Lewistown, and Allentown won the proud title of the "First Defenders."

During the war, Pennsylvania contributed 362,284 men for the Union Army and more than 14,000 men to the Navy, in addition to marines and to militia serving when the State was invaded. To train the Pennsylvania recruits, Camp Curtin was established on the outskirts of Harrisburg, and after the training of the original volunteers, the Federal government took it over for the rest of the war. Three hundred thousand Union soldiers passed through Camp Curtin while the war continued, and it was also a supply depot, a hospital, and a prisoner's detention camp. There were other camps at Easton, West Chester, Philadelphia, Chambersburg, and Pittsburgh.

Pennsylvania supplied not only men, but leaders. Some of the outstanding officers of the Union Army were Pennsylvanians, including McClellan, Meade, Reynolds, Hancock, and McClure -- in all, two commanders-in-chief, twelve major-generals, and forty-eight brigadier-generals. To naval leadership, the State gave Admiral David Porter, who opened the Mississippi, and three Rear-Admirals, Stewart, Dahlgren, and Godon.

Winning the war, however, was not merely a matter of military and naval engagements; it involved the problems of production, transportation, and civilian morale and leadership. Pennsylvania's contributions in these fields were of great significance. Her industrial development, engineering enterprise, and natural resources had largely helped to increase the relative strength and importance of the North before the war, and to provide better transportation facilities. Now the full industrial power of the State was devoted to the Union cause, and its recently developed railroad system, its great iron and steel industry, and its agricultural wealth were major factors in the national war effort. The famous Cramp shipyards of Philadelphia, and other shipbuilders, contributed to naval strength and the marine supply system. At Pittsburgh the Fort Pitt foundry turned out a vast supply of cannon, siege mortars, and other ordnance; while in Philadelphia two firms

manufactured cannon, rifles, pistols, swords, and other army supplies. Six large ironworks were established in Pittsburgh in one year, and production increased similarly throughout the State.

Today, among the many proud traditions of the Keystone State, none are remembered and cherished more highly than those associated with Abraham Lincoln, son of Kentucky and Illinois, but also -- through his forefathers -- a son of Pennsylvania. We remember with pride the support given him by Pennsylvanians on the battlefields, on the farms, and in the factories. We honor the recollection of his several visits to the Keystone State. Mementoes of Lincoln in Pennsylvania are numerous, from the Lincoln country of Berks County whence his ancestors came, to Gettysburg where he delivered his immortal address. Even Independence Hall, Pennsylvania's first State House and the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution, takes an added significance from the fact that Abraham Lincoln spoke there on the eve of assuming the Presidency, and lay there in state as a martyr to the Union which had been created within its walls.

